

Leicester, April 8/72  
Monday. 8<sup>th</sup>

Dear friend Webb,

Richard has just left us, & taken his seat in the muddy omnibus, on this wet, foggy & chill morn<sup>g</sup>, to plough through the mud to Worcester, & thence <sup>by R.R.</sup> to Boston. He is looking in fine stout health, and as if he could shoulder a heavy load of large responsibility. Tomorrow morn<sup>g</sup>. I propose to join him in Boston & give a little time to him there, to say another 'goodbye'; - for he is now hurrying off, having rec<sup>d</sup>. a teleg. despatch, since he came here, from his Cousin E. Harvey, saying that he must sail from New York next Sat<sup>y</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>. The ship they take is one of the new "White Star" line, & R. was saying, at breakfast, that he hoped to be in Cork by a fortnight fr. tomorrow - that would be quick work. He came to us from New York last Friday ev<sup>g</sup>; & after tea went with us to our next neighbours, where our "Shakespeare Club" had its weekly meeting. The roads, &c. have been so bad, by reason of the mud (the frost having gone into the ground this winter to a depth of 5 feet, a thing almost unknown before, & now 'coming out' very slowly, so far as at present appears) that we walked out but little, & rode <sup>ie. "drove"</sup> not at all. On Sat<sup>y</sup>, he & I walk<sup>d</sup> thro. the villages, visit<sup>g</sup> an 'Town Library', & one of the Card Clothing factories, &c. and yesterday he attended "meeting" with us, & afterwards called at Dr. Flint's, where he saw old Mr. Emerson, the veritable Centenarian, plus 8 months to a half. The old man's mind & memory are rapidly going now, & he continually asks his faithful daughter, who is his constant attendant, who she is? However, he adds, that he wants *Charlotte* - which is herself - the name he has always call<sup>d</sup> her.

We have had an extraordinarily rough & unpleasant winter, and a great deal of it. It set in before the end of November, with very high & piercing wind, & has kept it up, to much the same tune, ever since, - high wind, gales, being the most marked characteristics. There has been, too, an almost entire absence of either snow or rain, in this.



part of the Country, & dust has been driving about frequently, while the Mercury has been  $15^{\circ}$  to  $25^{\circ}$  below the freezing point. Then, when we were beginning to look for more spring like air & skies, when March came, we had, that month, by far worse weather than any which had preceded; - actually much colder, going to  $7^{\circ}$  below zero, & with these furious winds going night & day. And so it continued from the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the month to the very end, with not more than 2 really pleasant days. April too thus far has been chilly - everything out-door is a month almost behind time - no green grass to be seen, except a slight change to a very faint greenish hue in some sheltered place. Last year I picked sweet scented violets on my banks, (near the front door) on the 19<sup>th</sup> March, which was indeed unusually early for us.

Richard didn't find Ade. at home, of which he was sorry, & she very sorry too. She went to Boston, about 10 days since, to have for a while the care of her grandmother, who has been quite ill, & whose usual attendant is herself very ill indeed, - probably not to recover. Ade. is now at No. 3 Exeter St., & has almost entire charge of the old lady, who likes Ade's ways of doing for her, and A. is highly pleased to be able to be with her, & have charge of her. My mother is still confined to her bed, & has been very greatly reduced in strength. The attack seem<sup>d</sup> likely at first to come to pneumonia, or lung fever, but so far that has been warded off, but the cough continues, tho' the general symptoms are pronounced by her physician to be favorable. But at her age, - in her 85<sup>th</sup> year - & with her constitution greatly weakened. we cannot look for much power to resist the attacks of disease, & so we rather anxiously await Ade's almost daily reports. I went to Boston almost immediately on hearing of her illness, & remain<sup>d</sup> 5 days with her, - in which time we removed her from my sister Mary's house



(where she had been passing some weeks when her illness came on) to her own house, fortunately having for that a perfectly pleasant day; that was March 30, & the day before Easter. "Easter" proved a dreadful day, - snow, & rain all day - the streets almost impassable. - We were doubly thankful to have had so fine a day for the removal of my mother, wh. was accomplish'd quite comfortably to herself, she said, & she did not, apparently, receive any harm from it. My bro. John & I carried her in a chair, (thoroughly wrapped) from her bedside, down stairs, to the carriage door, & so again into the other house; but she would not let us carry her up stairs, & so, supporting her under the arms, we got her up one flight. That same day Ade. came from Leicester; and she will probably stay a number of weeks with her. Now you see, here I give you all these little particulars! and I don't mean to write a little note either, a few days hence, (!) & call myself "silly" for doing so! I was quite taken aback at getting y<sup>r</sup>. little note of March 15. - really almost apologizing for y<sup>r</sup>. previous long, descriptive letter about your household, your rides, your reading & other occupations, which we had enjoyed so much. I couldn't tell what to make of it, - & why you should be so suspicious of y<sup>r</sup>self, & almost so of us. You have always encouraged us to write <sup>to you</sup> very frankly about ourselves, all our affairs, & our neighbors, & especially about our absent children & their goings & comings & doings; and so we have done. But if now you look upon that sort of thing as "silly", where are we? & what are we to do in future? Well, I have in a measure answered that last question, myself, by giving you above a long screeed of particulars about our "noble selves"; &c. and perhaps I had better begin to apologize, &c. - but on the whole I think I won't, feeling very sure that you have no critical eye or mind for our gossiping talk, - & trusting that you will never distrust us again so much as to excuse y<sup>r</sup>self for putting confidence in us.



Indeed your letters always recall you & Deborah's visit  
to us - & seem to bring us all under one roof again; as  
we could like nothing better than that. That letter, for which  
you wrote in excuse, had seem'd. a particularly pleasant  
to us, telling of the arrangement you had made for regatta  
rides & exercise, & how you were enjoying it. One thing  
very pleasant to know, in the little note, viz. that Deborah  
improving in health. - Last Wednesday we had 2 cap  
letters fr. our children in Honolulu - & they came in the  
short time of 18 days - that won't be likely to happen again  
as the Steamer fr. Hon<sup>o</sup> to San Fr. was specially chartered  
that trip, & was a more powerful & fast one than the regular  
one, wh. was undergoing some repair. Then the "Snow-Bolt"  
in the Rocky Mts. is effectually raised, & the letters came across  
continent in 7 days. The letters gave very comforting assurance of the  
health, & happiness. A party of 60 gentlemen & ladies had come down  
in the "Steamer" from San Francisco, for the excursion, & had a  
to pass at the Islands. Some of them were known to Edward, & he  
had given to 4 of them, their first dinner-party, - their Chinaman, Ah  
not only cooking & serving the dinner, but waiting on the table besides  
as Edward says, "without a hitch," as Rich<sup>d</sup> perhaps will tell you  
particularly. R. will tell you of a gift <sup>citizens of Leicester</sup> we have lately had  
from Leicester, England. The managers of the "Town Museum"  
sent it to our Public Library, viz. Several Vols. - History of Leicester (&  
continued) - Guide to Leicester - Do to Charnwood Forest - Several illustrated  
pamphlets; & ten very handsome photographs of buildings, views,  
in & around Leicester. With these came a very handsome & friendly  
letter. All this was brought about thus - a Boston man, some 20  
years ago, went to England, - he was of English birth, & went to see his  
birth place, viz. Leicester, Engl<sup>d</sup>. He had left it when but 3 yrs. old,  
gone into Yorkshire for 5 or 6 yrs. Then the whole family emigrated to  
and, as it happened, came to Leicester, Massachusetts - the father  
a "blue-dyer," of excellent capacity, but unfortunately of intemperate habits  
so the family remain'd. always poor, but all of them of excellent character  
habits. The oldest son became one of our most useful & respected citizens  
- he is the Abraham Firth, whose long speech you may have noticed



the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Pamphlet wh. I sent to you last summer - (longer in the pamph<sup>t</sup>. than at the dinner table, by one half.) He is now Superintendent of the Boston & Albany Railroad, Eastern Division, - is a most efficient, thorough, & admirable officer, & always doing something for the benefit & good of the Employees of the Road, & others. - After getting home, he bethought him to get some works on the history of the English Leicester; & so he did, at some pains, & considerable expense, for 3 of the vols. were old quartos (i.e., 1790-91) & somewhat scarce - & then he presented them, with Thompson's Hist. of Leicester "to the End of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century", & 4 handsomely framed photog.<sup>s</sup> of Views in Leicester, to our Public Library here. Then, with help here, he collected pamphlets & documents relating to the history of this (Yankee) Leicester, & sent them to the Old Leicester; - the response to wh. was the pleasant & courteous letter aforesaid, & the additional books & pictures. We, in our turn, have just been sending a letter of acknowledgment, & with it some volumes, and an Atlas of Worcester County, Mass, & of the 58 different towns in it, to the Leicester Town Museum. So we have established a communi-  
cation, as the Electric Telegraphers say. - You are indeed a wonderful reader, - I can hardly comprehend such rapid reading; the list you give me, I suppose, includes what you listen to from your young-eyed readers; but must also include a great deal more; for it seems to me simply impossible that so many volumes could have been read aloud in 2 months - to wit, Lockhart's Scott, 10 vols. - Chambers' do., 1 - Life of R. Chamber, 1 - Forsyth's Novelists, &c. (you don't say how many - but call it) 1 - Whymper's Alps, 1 - " & so on, & so on", showing these were not all; at least 14 volumes. Your eyes must either have improved, or you are trying them over much, I should fear.

The "Spectator" now goes, at Richard's suggestion, to J. W. Sulist, who writes me that he is very much pleased to have it; and I am much pleased to send it to him. - I lately sent you a letter I had rec<sup>d</sup>. fr. the Librarian of Cornell University, in which he acknowledges your donation, & Elio's Pease Nichol's. I have quite recently <sup>sent</sup> to that Library my Natl. A. S. Standard - 25 Vols. (1 to 25) - Cradle of Liberty - some 10 vols. & Antislavery - all to be added to the "May Collection" there; also, I sent my complete file of "The Nation" (Vols. 1-12). In a letter, the Lib<sup>n</sup>. said they had no file of "The Liberator" - only about



100 odd numbers for the whole 35 years. You once told me you had a considerable lot of duplicates, of no use to your set. Have you them still? (for I suppose you did not send them to Worcester?) And if could you send them to Cornell? I am quite sure they wd. readily pay the freight on the box, through. You might safely take that for granted and I think they would be very glad to get them - more particularly if any of them are prior to 1840. I have almost promised to give them my set, - complete from 1840 to 1865, inclusive - if they cause the first 9 vols.

I am sending you by this oppo. a slip or two one from the Pall Mall Gazette, of whose opinion I have the impression you think favorably. Richard thinks you will have seen it; still, as I cut it out for you, I will send it along. It is remarkable for its <sup>substance</sup> seeing & stating so forcibly, the American Case as before the Geneva Conference. Harper's Weekly (of date April 13.) has also a very good statement of the same - wh. I shall send you, perhaps by same mail with this. Another slip is one of Eliza W. Wright's curious effusions, wh. may amuse a little (he was an old "new.org." Abolitionist, you'll remember.)

noon. A note from Ade. to her Mother represents my Mother as not much changed, any way - the physician continuing to speak favorably.

Do you have a Penny Post Delivery? and had we better send our letters to Leinster Road, rather than to Abbey St.?

A letter from you to Ade., also one in Alfred's hand to Richard have just come. I shall take them along to their respective destinations tomorrow. And referring you to Richard for any further details of the aspect of people & things at Leicester, I will rely on your eyes, & mind; and with affectionate regards to Deborah  
Am ever truly Yrs  
Saml May Jr.